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THE THREAT TO OUR REVOLUTION'

Nicaragua
Makes Its Case

These remarks of Sergio Ramírez Mercado, one of the three members of the governing junta of Nicaragua, were delivered to an assembly of Latin American intellectuals in Managua on March 4, two weeks before the government declared a "state of emergency." They were translated for The Nation by Darwin J. Flakoll, author of a book on the Sandinist revolution, who is now living in Nicaragua.

SERGIO RAMÍREZ MERCADO

During the past months we in Nicaragua have witnessed an increasing number of actions and threats endangering our country and our revolution. It is not only imperial rhetoric that is being used against Nicaragua; terrorism, military preparations, the intimidation of our neighbors and the most aggressive political weapons such as blackmail and sabotage are also being employed. We can enumerate a series of events in the past few weeks alone that enable us to clarify this menacing picture.

§ The creation of the so-called "Democratic Community" of Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica, a North American maneuver to legitimate the use of an intervention force in the Central American area, linked to the Inter-American Treaty of Mutual Assistance. More recently, this "community" has been joined by the United States; Colombia, which has also authorized the establishment of Yankee military bases; and Guatemala. The intent to establish a political and military wall around Nicaragua is clear-cut.

§ The establishment of U.S. military bases on the island of Amapala in the Gulf of Fonseca and on San Andrés island in the Caribbean, both of them within the continental shelf waters of Nicaragua. These naval and air bases are designed to involve Nicaragua militarily along both its coasts.

§ The presence of North American warships, equipped with the most sophisticated communications apparatus, in the waters of the Gulf of Fonseca, an operation which the president of the Salvadoran junta, José Napoleón Duarte, admits having authorized.

§ The supply of money, training and arms to the bands of former Somoza National Guardsmen operating from Honduran territory, as part of a clandestine operation run by the Central Intelligence Agency. The existence of this operation was admitted by the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Thomas Enders, before the intelligence committees of both houses of the U.S. Congress during the course of a secret session held last December.

In addition, President Reagan's ambassador at large,

retired Gen. Vernon Walters, has been charged with making preparations throughout the Caribbean area, and veteran C.I.A. officer Nestor Sanchez, now Assistant Secretary of Defense for Inter-American Affairs, was placed in charge of the operation.

The U.S. National Security Council has approved a \$19 million budget to finance military, political and economic destabilization actions against Nicaragua. It has also approved an eight-point plan of action to carry out this destabilization operation using military officers from South American countries, principally Argentina, to train former National Guardsmen and to infiltrate Nicaraguan territories as mercenaries.

As a consequence of all this terrorist activity, bands of former National Guardsmen, in alliance with Steadman Fagoth, a former Somoza security agent, were able this past December and January to organize their "Red Christmas" operation, which destroyed indigenous communities along the Coco River between Nicaragua and Honduras and created a beachhead in Nicaraguan territory. Before the revolutionary government re-established absolute control of the zone, Red Christmas resulted in the murder of nearly sixty Nicaraguans, including civilians and members of our frontier guards, army troops and security forces. Red Christmas also provoked the forced exodus of a considerable number of the indigenous communities into Honduras. National Guardsmen tortured and raped residents of the communities as well as local medical personnel.

The revolutionary government was forced to relocate the riverside communities in more secure areas of the national territory, where our Miskito brethren will have, for the first time, access to systematic medical assistance, education, adequate housing, electricity and cultivable land. This relocation has given rise to a ferocious, slanderous campaign of lies mounted by the C.I.A. and the State Department against our revolution.

State security organs of the Ministry of Interior have uncovered a plot, mounted in Costa Rica, Honduras and the United States, to blow up Nicaragua's national cement factory and petroleum refinery. Huge quantities of explosives were smuggled into the country for this purpose. One of the principals implicated in the plot confessed that he had received \$50,000 from officials of the Argentine general staff and had learned that a special Argentine commando unit was to be located in Tegucigalpa to direct sabotage operations against Nicaragua.

A commercial airplane of Aeronica, the Nicaraguan national airline, was blown up in the airport of Mexico City by a time bomb that was supposed to have destroyed the plane in midflight, killing its 100 passengers.

A suitcase containing explosives blew up in the Sandino Airport terminal, killing three baggage handlers. The suitcase had been placed aboard a plane in Tegucigalpa, and this act of terrorism was designed to force cancellation of the visit of President José López Portillo of Mexico to

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Nicaragua. It was only by fortuitous accident that the explosion failed to kill the dozens of passengers who were waiting nearby for their luggage.

As can be seen, all weapons of terror, aggression and barefaced international propaganda are being activated. Former National Guardsmen are being used for assassination and massacre after having been armed and trained on North American territory as well as in Honduras and Guatemala. No scruples were permitted to stand in the way of bringing Steadman Fagoth to Washington, D.C., where he appeared before Congressional committees and human rights groups so that State Department spokesmen might repeat his lies. Freedom House and the Institute of Religion and Democracy, both of which are C.I.A. fronts,* were used, as well as *Le Figaro* and Radio 15th of September, located in Honduran territory. Newspapers and radio stations in Central America and throughout the entire continent are fed a steady diet of all these lies.

Faced with this increasing aggression, faced with the imminent peril of an escalation of this aggression, our revolution has responded with maturity and serenity. We are a firmly committed people. We will never retreat in the face of any threat, but we have given evidence—and we will con-

tinue to do so—that we desire a global understanding in favor of peace in Central America, bringing stability and security to our region. . . .

An ordinary North American father wrote to President Calvin Coolidge in 1927 after his son, a Marine, had died in the mountains of Las Segovias in Nicaragua in combat with the Army for the Defense of National Sovereignty, commanded by Gen. Augusto César Sandino. In his letter to Coolidge he said that his son had died unjustly in Nicaragua, fighting unjustly against a people who had never offered a single offense to the United States and, what was worse, fighting to defend interests that were not even his own: the interests of Yankee bankers, hegemonical interests that were of no concern to the North American people. And General Sandino said in 1928 to a correspondent of *The Nation*, Carleton Beals: "If the American people had not been dulled to justice and the elementary rights of humanity, they would not so easily have forgotten their own past, when a handful of ragged soldiers marched through the snow, leaving bloody tracks behind them, to gain their liberty and independence. If their consciences had not been hardened by materialistic enrichment, the Americans would not have forgotten so easily that a nation, sooner or later and however weak it may be, will obtain its liberty, and that each abuse of power hastens the destruction of those who employ it." □

* When contacted by *The Nation*, both Leonard Sussman, executive director of Freedom House, and Penn Kemble, a member of the executive committee of the Institute of Religion and Democracy, denied this charge.